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THE MONSTERS ARE COMING!
BEWARE!™
LOOK OUT!! HERE IT COMES-- AND IT'S TEN STORIES HIGH!
BULLETS BOUNCE OFF ITS HIDE LIKE RAINDROPS!
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! NOTHING CAN STOP--
...THE THING THAT STALKS SKULL VALLEY!

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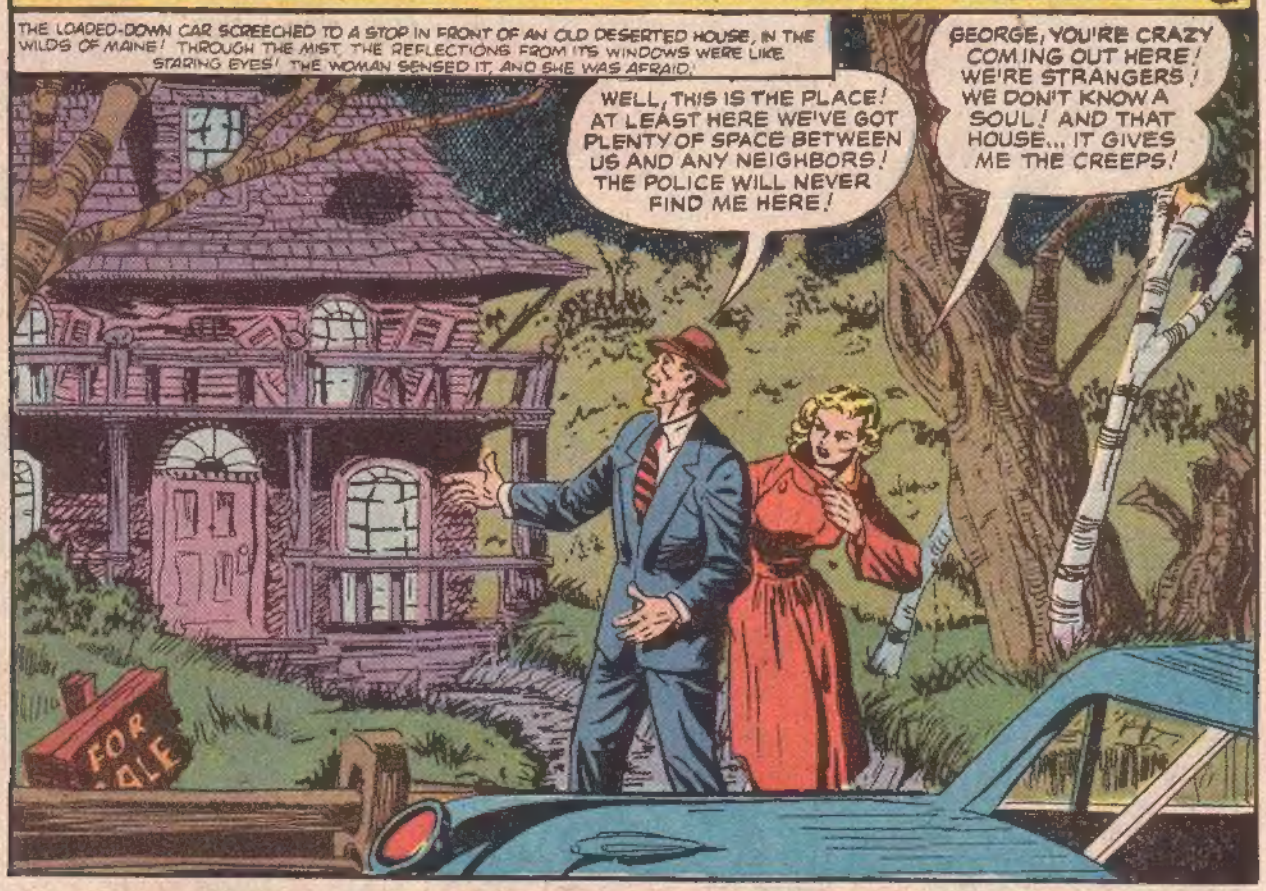
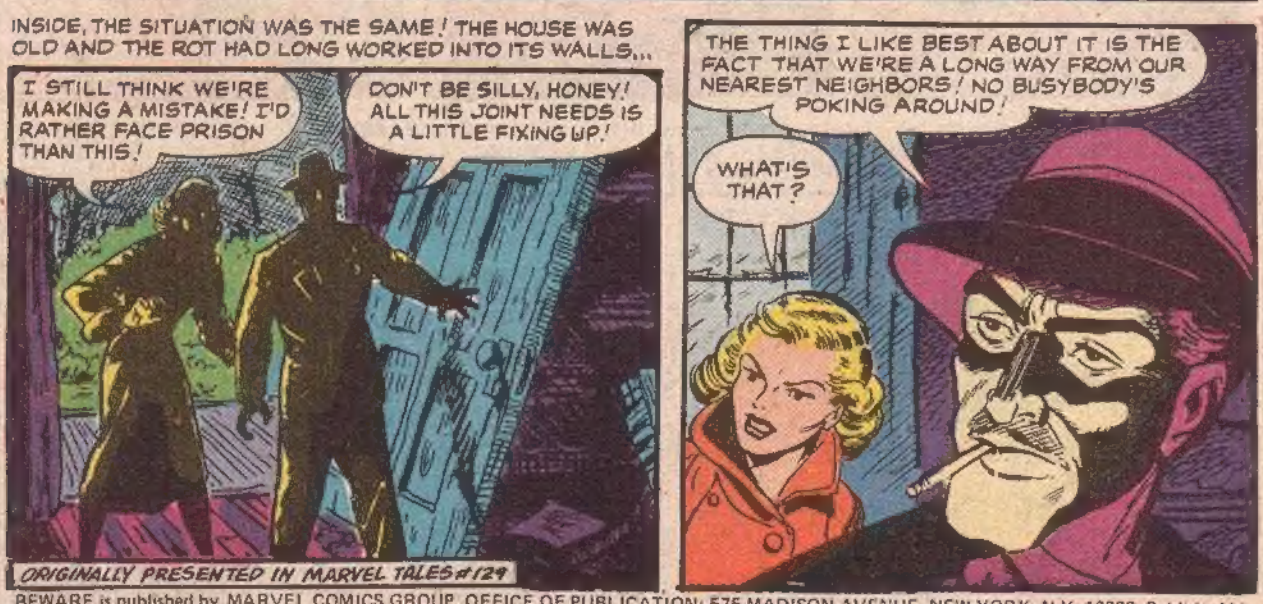
Stan Lee PRESENTS: BEWARE! THE MONSTERS ARE COMING!™

THE HELPING HAND!


THE LOADED-DOWN CAR SCREECHED TO A STOP IN FRONT OF AN OLD DESERTED HOUSE, IN THE WILDS OF MAINE! THROUGH THE MIST, THE REFLECTIONS FROM ITS WINDOWS WERE LIKE STARING EYES! THE WOMAN SENSED IT, AND SHE WAS AFRAID!
WELL, THIS IS THE PLACE! AT LEAST HERE WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF SPACE BETWEEN US AND ANY NEIGHBORS! THE POLICE WILL NEVER FIND ME HERE!
GEORGE, YOU'RE CRAZY COMING OUT HERE! WE'RE STRANGERS! WE DON'T KNOW A SOUL! AND THAT HOUSE... IT GIVES ME THE CREEPS!
FOR SALE


INSIDE, THE SITUATION WAS THE SAME! THE HOUSE WAS OLD AND THE ROT HAD LONG WORKED INTO ITS WALLS...
I STILL THINK WE'RE MAKING A MISTAKE! I'D RATHER FACE PRISON THAN THIS!
DON'T BE SILLY, HONEY! ALL THIS JOINT NEEDS IS A LITTLE FIXING UP!
THE THING I LIKE BEST ABOUT IT IS THE FACT THAT WE'RE A LONG WAY FROM OUR NEAREST NEIGHBORS! NO BUSYBODY'S POKING AROUND!
WHAT'S THAT?

ORIGINALLY PRESENTED IN MARVEL TALES #129

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NOW, JEAN, DON'T TELL ME THAT SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN IN ON AS MANY DEALS AS YOU HAVE, IS AFRAID OF A LITTLE RAT!
I TELL YOU I DON'T LIKE THIS PLACE! THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD THAT GIVES ME THE JITTERS!

DESPITE JEAN'S TEARS, THE COUPLE SETTLED DOWN IN THE OLD HOUSE! GEORGE WORKED ON THE PLACE TO MAKE IT LIVABLE AND IT SEEMED THAT HE HAD FOUND THE PERFECT HIDE-OUT...

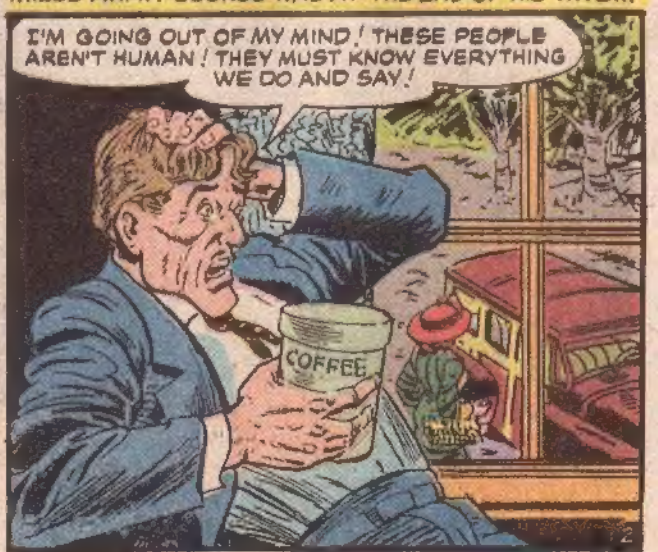
WELL, THAT'S THE LAST STRAW! HERE I KNOCK MYSELF OUT TO SET US UP COMFORTABLY... AND YOU CAN'T REMEMBER TO DO THE SHOPPING!
IT'S THIS PLACE! I KEEP GETTING THE FEELING THAT SOMEONE'S WATCHING ME! IT'S HORRIBLE!

THE SILENT NIGHT WAS SHATTERED WITH THE ECHO OF A STRANGE AND UNFAMILIAR SOUND...

GEORGE NEVER FOUND OUT HOW THE NEIGHBOR KNEW OF THEIR NEED, BUT IT WAS EVEN STRANGER WHEN A WEEK LATER HIS WIFE RAN OUT OF FLOUR...

UNDERSTAND YOU FOLKS RAN SHORT OF FLOUR TODAY! MY WIFE SAID I SHOULD DRIVE OVER AND BRING YOU SOME!
IT'S INCREDIBLE! YOU LIVE SO FAR AWAY, AND YET YOU KNEW WHAT WE'RE SHORT OF!
FLOUR XXX

IT HAPPENED TIME AND AGAIN, WITH NO HINT OF HOW THE NEIGHBORS COULD KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING MILES AWAY! GEORGE WAS AT THE END OF HIS WITS...

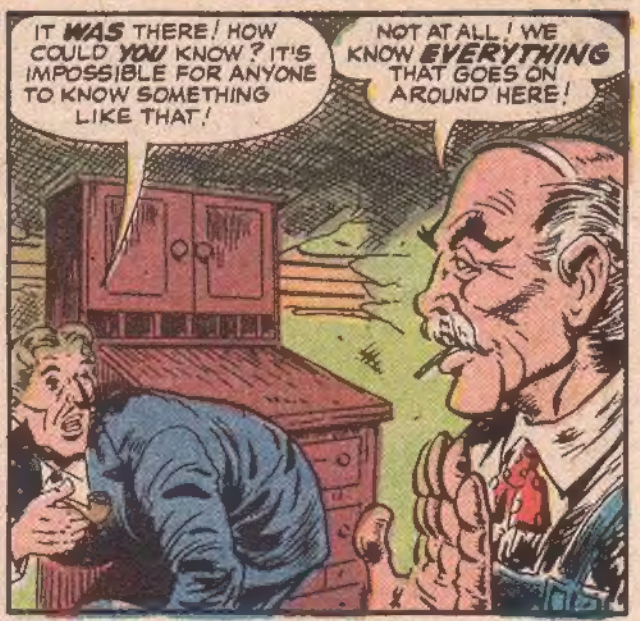


THOR AND HERCULES— BEFORE THE GATES OF HELL! DON'T MISS THIS LANDMARK ISSUE!

I'M SCARED, GEORGE! LET'S GET AWAY FROM THIS PLACE! MAYBE THEY KNOW ALL ABOUT US... MAYBE IT'S A TRAP!
NO! I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT! THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY TO GET IT OUT OF THEM!

I KNOW! I'LL INVITE A COUPLE OF THEM TO DINNER WITH THEIR WIVES AND WE'LL FIND OUT HOW THEY WORK THIS GIMMICK!
INVITE THEM HERE? IF THEY PULL ANY OF THOSE MIND-READING TRICKS, I'LL DIE!

IGNORING JEAN'S FEARFUL PROTESTS, GEORGE INVITED HIS NEIGHBORS TO DINNER! WHAT STARTED OUT QUITE SIMPLY, TURNED INTO AN EVENT THAT NEITHER OF THEM WOULD EVER FORGET...


IT WAS THERE! HOW COULD YOU KNOW? IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANYONE TO KNOW SOMETHING LIKE THAT!
NOT AT ALL! WE KNOW EVERYTHING THAT GOES ON AROUND HERE!

FROM THAT POINT ON, GEORGE WAS UNABLE TO TALK TO HIS GUESTS! HE COULDN'T HIDE THE FACT THAT HE WAS TERRIFIED OF THEM...

WELL, G'NIGHT! I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO LEAVE SO EARLY, BUT GEORGE ISN'T FEELING WELL!
IT'S ALL RIGHT... Y'GOT TO COME OVER TO OUR PLACE SOME NIGHT!

THEY'RE GONE! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE CARRIED ON THAT WAY! THEY'LL GET SUSPICIOUS! THEY MIGHT GUESS ABOUT US!
THEY KNOW EVERYTHING! THEY'RE NOT HUMAN! THEY'RE PROBABLY CREATURES FROM ANOTHER WORLD IN HUMAN DISGUISE!
I'M CALLING THE POLICE!
3

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

REWARD!

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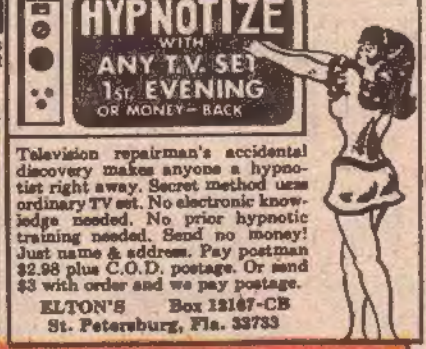

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W24

WITHIN HALF AN HOUR AFTER HIS CALL, THE POLICE HAD THE HOUSE SURROUNDED! GUNS WERE TRAINED ON EVERY DOOR AND WINDOW...
ALL RIGHT, GEORGE RIBBONS... WE'VE GOT THE PLACE BOXED IN! COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS UP!
DON'T WORRY... I'M COMING OUT UNARMED!
I SURRENDER! BUT YOU'VE GOT TO GET THOSE OTHERS... THEY'RE NOT HUMAN! PROBABLY FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THE NEIGHBORS! THEY'RE NOT HUMAN! THEY CAN TELL WHAT'S GOING ON IN ANOTHER PLACE! THEY'RE DANGEROUS!
IT'S TRUE! I SENSED IT THE MINUTE WE CAME HERE!
AFTER TELLING THE POLICE CHIEF ALL THE HAPPENINGS OF THE PAST TEN DAYS, THE POLICEMAN THOUGHT DEEPLY FOR A LONG TIME! THEN HE TURNED TO ONE OF HIS MEN...
OKAY, ROBBINS... WE'LL SEE! HANK, GIVE ME THAT PAIR OF BINOCULARS!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THEM? THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE!
HMMM... JUST AS I THOUGHT! YOU'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK FOR YOURSELF!
WHAT DO YOU SEE UP THERE? HAVE THEY CHANGED THEIR SHAPES OR SOMETHING?
YOU GOT YOURSELF ALL WORKED UP FOR NOTHING! CITY PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THAT IN THIS SMALL TOWN, EVERYONE CHECKS UP ON HIS NEIGHBORS THAT WAY!
NO! IT CAN'T BE!
I'VE BEEN TRICKED! I'VE BEEN FRAMED! YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME! LET ME GO!
NOBODY TRICKED YOU BUT YOURSELF, ROBBINS! YOU JUST WEREN'T USE TO LIVING NEAR FRIENDLY PEOPLE!
THE END
4

THE Black Dungeon

TO KNOW THE SECRET OF THE BLACK DUNGEON IS TO DIE!
WHAT WAS THE TERRIBLE SECRET LOCKED BEHIND THE DOORS OF THE TOMB? WHAT STRANGE POWER COMPELLED ME TO OPEN THE DOORS AND FREE THAT WHICH CRIED FROM WITHIN FOR RELEASE?
THESE ARE THE FRIGHTENING EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE MONSTROUS THING WITHIN THE TOMB...
YOU HAVE NEVER READ A TALE LIKE THIS BEFORE...AND YOU NEVER WILL AGAIN!
FOR THE TERROR OF THE BLACK DUNGEON CAN BE KNOWN TO A HUMAN BEING ONLY ONCE IN A LIFETIME!

WHERE SHALL I BEGIN MY STORY..A STORY THAT ENDED IN HORROR AND SUDDEN, VIOLENT DEATH! PERHAPS I SHOULD BEGIN WITH THE NIGHT I RESCUED POOR OTTO...
HERE, YOU BOYS... GO HOME! LEAVE THAT POOR MAN ALONE!
YAAHH! UGLY FACE! UGLY FACE!
ORIGINALLY PRESENTED IN MYSTIC® 2

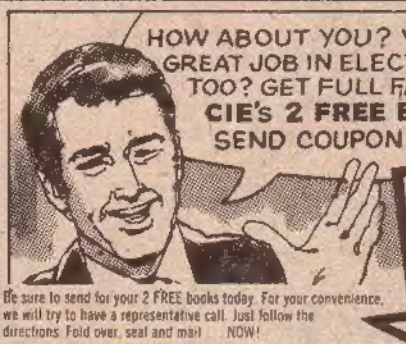
HAVE YOU NOTHING BETTER TO DO THAN TO PERSECUTE SOMEONE LESS FORTUNATE THAN YOURSELVES? GO AWAY BEFORE I TAKE A BROOM TO YOU!

THE POOR LITTLE MAN LAY HUDDLED ON THE GROUND WHERE HE HAD FALLEN! I FELT AN IMMENSE PITY FOR THIS POOR CREATURE...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES, THANK YOU! I AM NOT HURT!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

"I'm sick and tired of my Job!"

YOU SEEM MIGHTY HAPPY IN ELECTRONICS, JIM. LEVEL WITH ME-HOW'D YOU BREAK IN?
EASIER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK. WITH CIE TRAINING, I LEARNED EVERYTHING I NEEDED RIGHT AT HOME... IN MY SPARE TIME!



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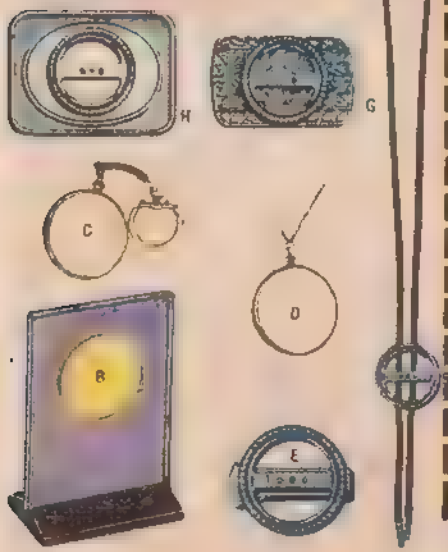

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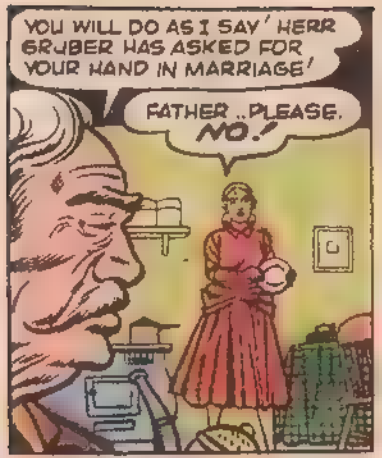
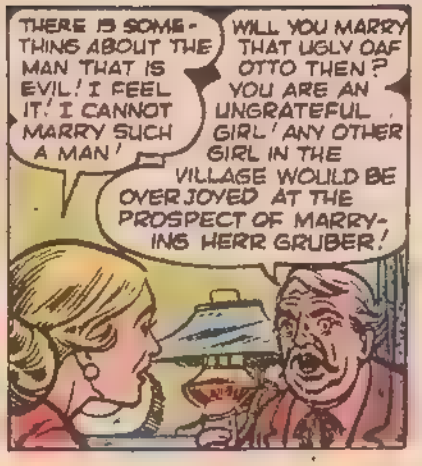
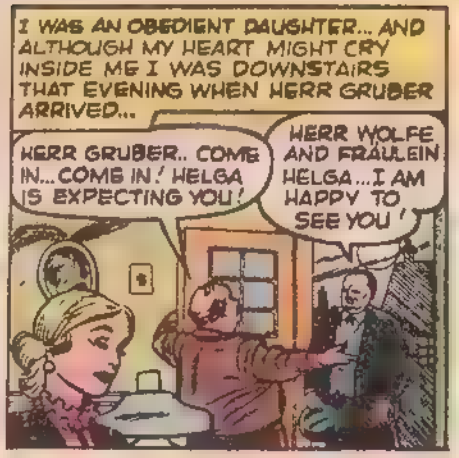
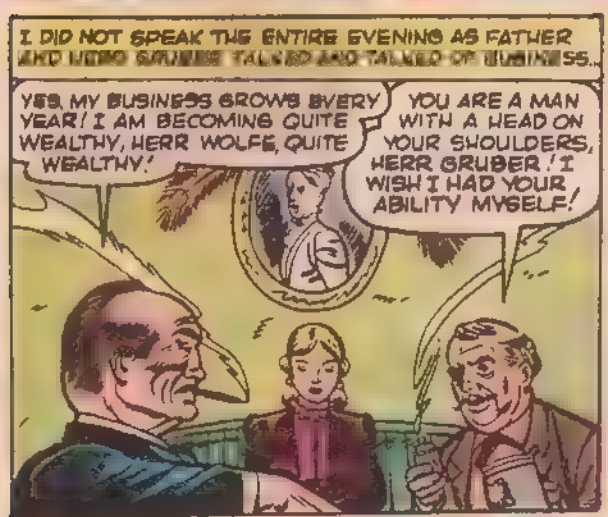
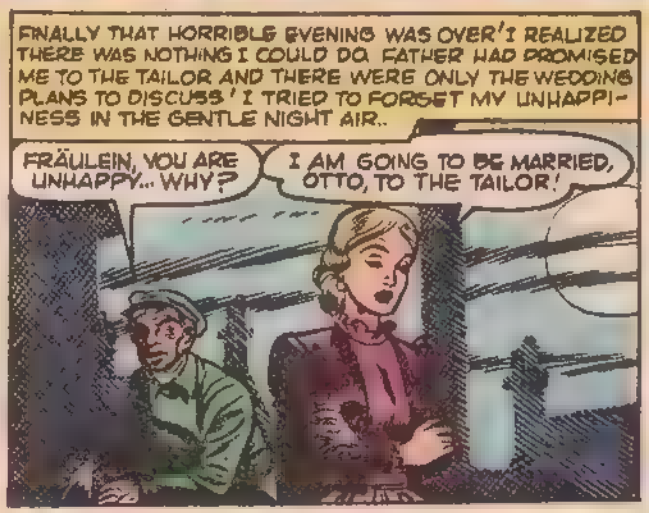
WHY DO YOU HIDE YOUR FACE THEN..YOU MUST BE HURT! HERE, LET ME SEE
NO, FRÄULEIN, NO! DO NOT LOOK AT MY FACE!
SLOWLY HE REMOVED HIS HANDS FROM HIS FACE AND I FELT MYSELF FLINCH! IT WAS AN INCREDIBLY GROTESQUE, MISSHAPEN FACE...
YOU SEE...I AM NOT VERY PRETTY! I SEE YOU FLINCH AT THE SIGHT OF ME! BUT NO MATTER, I AM USED TO IT... IT IS THE SAME EVERYWHERE / EVERYWHERE I GO I AM DRIVEN OUT BECAUSE OF MY HIDEOUSNESS ... AND I WILL GO NOW!
I DON'T KNOW WHY I DID IT.. BUT I STOPPED HIS WORDS AND SAID..
NO..PLEASE.. YOU CAN STAY HERE! WE NEED SOMEONE TO HELP AROUND THE PLACE AND THERE IS A ROOM YOU CAN HAVE!
FROM THAT DAY ON OTTO BECAME ALMOST MY SLAVE, FOLLOWING ME EVERYWHERE I WENT, DOING THINGS FOR ME, HELPING ME AT EVERY STEP AND BECAUSE MY FAMILY WAS WELL-RESPECTED THE TOWNSPEOPLE BEGAN TO ACCEPT OTTO..
THE PEOPLE DO NOT STARE AT ME WHEN I AM WITH YOU, FRÄULEIN HELGA!
IT IS BECAUSE THEY ARE BEGINNING TO SEE HOW GOOD AND GENTLE YOU REALLY ARE!
IN OUR WHOLE VILLAGE THERE WAS ONLY ONE PERSON I DISLIKED.. THE TAILOR.. THE WEALTHIEST MAN IN TOWN! THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THAT FRIGHTENED ME..AS THOUGH HE WERE A THING OF EVIL! ONE DAY AS WE PASSED HIS SHOP HE STOPPED ME...
FRÄULEIN HELGA..GIVE ME A MOMENT TO CLOSE MY SHOP AND I WILL CARRY YOUR BUNDLES FOR YOU...
DO NOT TROUBLE YOURSELF, HERR GRUBER, OTTO IS ALL THE HELP I NEED!
TAILOR
CAFE
THEN DO ME THE HONOR OF STOPPING FOR A MOMENT.. I HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU!
BEFORE I COULD PROTEST HE HAD LED ME INTO HIS SHOP! AT MY SIDE I COULD FEEL OTTO'S THOUGHTS URGING ME NOT TO STAY...
THIS DRESS IS A PRESENT FOR YOU, FRÄULEIN! IN IT YOU WILL BE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE VILLAGE!
IT IS A LOVELY DRESS, HERR GRUBER..
BUT MY FATHER WOULD NEVER PERMIT ME TO ACCEPT SUCH AN EXPENSIVE GIFT! COME, OTTO, WE MUST GET BACK HOME! GOOD-BYE, HERR GRUBER!
GOOD-BYE, FRÄULEIN, WE WILL MEET AGAIN SOON!
I DID NOT TAKE HIS WORDS SERIOUSLY BUT THAT IS WHERE I UNDERESTIMATED THE MAN! THAT SAME EVENING WHILE I WAS PREPARING DINNER MY FATHER CAME INTO THE KITCHEN...
I WANT YOU TO LOOK YOUR PRETTIEST TONIGHT, HELGA, HERR GRUBER, THE TAILOR, IS COMING TO CALL ON YOU!
PAPA... YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT! I WILL NOT COME DOWNSTAIRS AT ALL IF ME IS HERE!
NOTHING CAN WITHSTAND THE HOWL OF THE BANSHEE— NOT EVEN CAPTAIN AMERICA!

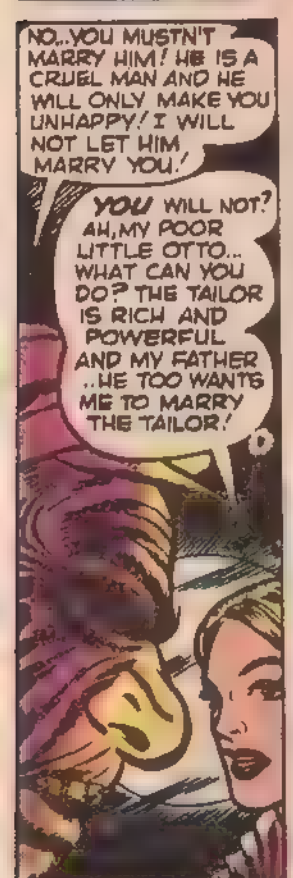


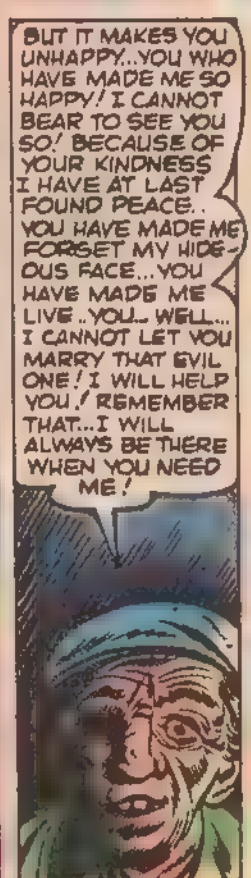

THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE MAN THAT IS EVIL! I FEEL IT! I CANNOT MARRY SUCH A MAN!
WILL YOU MARRY THAT UGLY OAF OTTO THEN? YOU ARE AN UNGRATEFUL GIRL! ANY OTHER GIRL IN THE VILLAGE WOULD BE OVERJOYED AT THE PROSPECT OF MARRYING HERR GRUBER!


I WAS AN OBEDIENT DAUGHTER... AND ALTHOUGH MY HEART MIGHT CRY INSIDE ME I WAS DOWNSTAIRS THAT EVENING WHEN HERR GRUBER ARRIVED...
HERR GRUBER.. COME IN...COME IN! HELGA IS EXPECTING YOU!
HERR WOLFE AND FRÄULEIN HELGA...I AM HAPPY TO SEE YOU!


I DID NOT SPEAK THE ENTIRE EVENING AS FATHER AND HERR GRUBER TALKED AND TALKED OF BUSINESS..
YES, MY BUSINESS GROWS EVERY YEAR! I AM BECOMING QUITE WEALTHY, HERR WOLFE, QUITE WEALTHY!
YOU ARE A MAN WITH A HEAD ON YOUR SHOULDERS, HERR GRUBER! I WISH I HAD YOUR ABILITY MYSELF!


FINALLY THAT HORRIBLE EVENING WAS OVER! I REALIZED THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO. FATHER HAD PROMISED ME TO THE TAILOR AND THERE WERE ONLY THE WEDDING PLANS TO DISCUSS! I TRIED TO FORGET MY UNHAPPINESS IN THE GENTLE NIGHT AIR..
FRÄULEIN, YOU ARE UNHAPPY... WHY?
I AM GOING TO BE MARRIED, OTTO, TO THE TAILOR!


NO...YOU MUSTN'T MARRY HIM! HE IS A CRUEL MAN AND HE WILL ONLY MAKE YOU UNHAPPY! I WILL NOT LET HIM MARRY YOU!
YOU WILL NOT? AH, MY POOR LITTLE OTTO... WHAT CAN YOU DO? THE TAILOR IS RICH AND POWERFUL AND MY FATHER ..HE TOO WANTS ME TO MARRY THE TAILOR!


BUT IT MAKES YOU UNHAPPY...YOU WHO HAVE MADE ME SO HAPPY! I CANNOT BEAR TO SEE YOU SO! BECAUSE OF YOUR KINDNESS I HAVE AT LAST FOUND PEACE.. YOU HAVE MADE ME FORGET MY HIDEOUS FACE...YOU HAVE MADE ME LIVE..YOU.. WELL... I CANNOT LET YOU MARRY THAT EVIL ONE! I WILL HELP YOU! REMEMBER THAT...I WILL ALWAYS BE THERE WHEN YOU NEED ME!

POOR LITTLE OTTO...HE WAS SO LOYAL... BUT HE COULD DO NOTHING..NO ONE COULD DO ANYTHING! LATE THAT NIGHT I WAS AWAKENED BY VOICES NEAR THE HOUSE...
IT'S OTTO AND THE TAILOR! WHERE ARE THEY GOING AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

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I FOLLOWED THEM, KEEPING AT A DISTANCE WHERE THEY COULD NOT SEE ME! OTTO LED THE TAILOR THROUGH THE STREETS OUTSIDE OF THE TOWN AND TO THE VILLAGE GRAVEYARD! I FELT MY BLOOD RUN COLD INSIDE OF ME!
OH MY POOR OTTO! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO FOR ME?
HOW MUCH FURTHER? I'M GETTING TIRED!
ONLY A LITTLE WAY NOW! YOU WILL NOT BE SORRY THAT YOU CAME!
OTTO LED HIM FURTHER INTO THE GRAVEYARD AND IT WAS ALL I COULD DO TO KEEP UP WITH THEM! THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF THE MOON CAST EERIE SHADOWS OVER THE GRAVES...
IT IS THERE IN THAT MAUSOLEUM!
WHY, THAT IS MY FAMILY'S BURIAL VAULT!
THAT IS WHY I CAME TO YOU! IT IS ONLY FAIR THAT WHAT I HAVE FOUND SHOULD BELONG MOSTLY TO YOU!
STOP WASTING TIME WITH TALK! GET THAT DOOR OPEN!
THEY'RE GOING INSIDE!
THEY LEFT THE DOOR OPEN AND I HID MYSELF AT ONE SIDE WHERE I COULD SEE WHAT WENT ON INSIDE! MY HEART WAS BEATING SO LOUD I WAS AFRAID THEY WOULD HEAR!
THERE'S GOLD AND JEWELS UNDER THE FLOOR! I SAW THEM MYSELF!
SOME OF MY ANCESTORS MUST HAVE BURIED THEM HERE, HERE.. ONE SIDE LET ME DIG!
OTTO WAS STANDING BEHIND THE TAILOR AND WHILE I WATCHED IN HORROR I SAW HIM RAISE HIS SHOVEL ABOVE HIS HEAD...
BUT SOME INNER INSTINCT MUST HAVE WARNED THE TAILOR FOR
SO THIS IS YOUR GAME!
OH! STUPID UGLY ONE! DID YOU THINK I BELIEVED YOUR SILLY LITTLE STORY!

I WAS FROZEN WITH TERROR! I TRIED TO SCREAM BUT NO SOUND CAME FROM MY LIPS AS THE TAILOR HIT OTTO AGAIN AND AGAIN WITH THE SHOVEL!
YOU HAVE BEEN IN MY WAY A LONG TIME! NOW I WILL BE RID OF YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL!
LEAVING OTTO A CRUMPLED HEAP ON THE FLOOR THE TAILOR RUSHED UP THE STEPS TO WHERE I WAS FROZEN TO THE SPOT FROM SHEER HORROR...
HELGA! YOU SAID...WELL, NO MATTER... I HAVE WAYS TO SEE THAT YOU SHALL NEVER TELL WHAT YOU SAW!
YOU CAN'T LEAVE OTTO TO DIE IN THERE! HE IS STILL ALIVE!
OH, CAN'T I? HE WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME TO ME!
HE GRABBED HOLD OF ME AND FORCED ME TO RUN WITH HIM! AND AS WE RAN WE HEARD OTTO'S VOICE RISING FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE MAUSOLEUM LIKE A VOICE FROM A GRAVE! IT FOLLOWED US ON OUR TERROR STRICKEN FLIGHT!
PLEASE... LET ME GO BACK! HE IS STILL ALIVE!
SHUT UP.. AND RUN! WE MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE!
YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH THIS, DO YOU HEAR ME, TAILOR..
BUT WE COULDN'T RUN FAST ENOUGH TO ESCAPE THE SOUND OF OTTO'S VOICE
I WILL PROTECT HER FROM YOU ALWAYS.. YOU WILL NEVER ESCAPE ME!
I STRUGGLED TO BREAK AWAY, BUT HIS HOLD ON MY ARM WAS TOO STRONG! THEN THE WORDS THAT STOPPED MY STRUGGLES ENTIRELY!
LISTEN TO ME! YOUR FATHER OWES ME MONEY.. THAT IS WHY HE AGREED TO OUR MARRIAGE!
FATHER WOULD NOT LET ME MARRY YOU FOR ANY AMOUNT OF MONEY! WHEN HE HEARS
IF YOU SO MUCH AS SAY A WORD OF THIS I SHALL TELL PEOPLE YOU AND YOUR FATHER PLANNED TO KILL ME TO KEEP FROM PAYING ME AND WHO DO YOU THINK THEY WILL BELIEVE YOU AND YOUR UGLY FRIEND... OR ME?
YOU WOULD DO THAT?
BUT I KNEW HE WOULD DO EVERYTHING HE SAID! THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO.. SO A WEEK LATER WE WERE MARRIED AND IN LESS THAN A MONTH WE WERE ON A SHIP HEADED FOR THE UNITED STATES!

ONCE SITUATED, MY HUSBAND, KONRAD, BOUGHT A HUGE, UGLY HOUSE WHICH I DISLIKED ON SIGHT! IT WAS COLD AND UNFRIENDLY, AND IT RESEMBLED A PRISON MORE THAN A HOME!

YES, KONRAD!

THIS IS WHERE WE SHALL LIVE, HELGA!

I WAS PREPARED FOR ALMOST ANYTHING FROM KONRAD AFTER WHAT I KNEW ABOUT HIM, BUT AGAIN I HAD UNDERESTIMATED HIM! WE WERE HARDLY SETTLED IN OUR NEW HOME WHEN HE TOLD ME THERE WAS SOMETHING HE HAD TO SAY TO ME!

I'VE DECIDED IT'S TIME YOU KNEW THE TRUTH MY DEAR! I MARRIED YOU FOR TWO REASONS ONLY..FIRST... BECAUSE YOU SEEMED UNOBTAINABLE TO ME! OH, I KNOW HOW YOU HATED ME! BUT I *ALWAYS* GET WHAT I WANT!

AND SECONDLY... AFTER THAT INCIDENT WITH OTTO. I HAD TO MARRY YOU TO SEAL YOUR LIPS! YOU SEE, MY DEAR, I LIED TO YOU. YOUR FATHER OWED ME NO MONEY! NOW WHO CAN THAT BE AT THE DOOR?

RING RING

I SAT THERE NUMB WITH HORROR AS HE RUSHED PAST ME! HE HAD TRICKED ME INTO MARRYING HIM! HE HAD ALSO FORCED ME TO LEAVE POOR OTTO TO DIE! WHAT SORT OF MONSTER WAS HE THAT HE COULD DO SUCH A THING? FINALLY I BECAME CONSCIOUS OF HIS VOICE FROM THE OTHER ROOM.

IS MRS GRUBER IN?

I AM MR. GRUBER! IT WAS VERY KIND OF YOU TO COME!

BUT YOU SEE, MY WIFE IS AN INVALID! HER DOCTOR ALLOWS HER NO COMPANY!

OH, WE'RE SO SORRY TO HEAR THAT!

I WAS A PRISONER IN MY OWN HOME! NOT ALLOWED TO LEAVE AND NO ONE PERMITTED TO SEE ME! WHAT NEW TORTURES WOULD KONRAD PUT ME TO?

FINALLY, IN SHEER DESPERATION FOR SOMETHING TO DO, I BEGAN TO EXPLORE THE GREAT BARREN ROOMS OF THIS MONSTROUS HOUSE

I WILL GO MAD IF I DO NOT FIND SOMETHING TO DO!

HERE'S A ROOM I'VE NEVER BEEN IN! IT SEEMS TO BE SOME SORT OF STORE ROOM!

I PUSHED MY WAY INTO THE DARK MUSTY LITTLE ROOM! THE DOOR SLAMMED SHUT BEHIND ME! SUDDENLY, I STOPPED SHORT!

OH...*OTTO!*

MY HEART ALMOST STOPPED. BUT THEN I SAW MY MISTAKE!

WHY, IT'S ONLY ONE OF MY HUSBAND'S TAILOR DUMMIES, AND WITH ITS SMASHED, DISFIGURED FACE IT LOOKS ALMOST LIKE MY POOR LITTLE OTTO. OH, IF IT ONLY WERE OTTO... MY LIFE WOULD BE MORE BEARABLE!

6

AND THEN I HAD AN IDEA! A SILLY IDEA PERHAPS BUT I WAS SO LONELY.. SO DESPERATE FOR SOMETHING TO DO I CLUTCHED AT ANYTHING TO MAKE MY LIFE A LITTLE MORE BEARABLE!

YOU LOOK LIKE MY POOR LITTLE OTTO...THEREFORE YOU **SHALL** BE HIM! I SHALL PRETEND YOU ARE HIM.. AND TALK TO YOU...AND...AND I CAN MAKE CLOTHES FOR YOU... WHY, IT WILL BE JUST AS THOUGH I HAD OTTO BACK!

MY EMPTY DAYS WERE NOW FILLED WITH ACTIVITY! I MADE AN ENTIRE WARDROBE FOR THE DUMMY...

DO YOU LIKE YOUR NEW SUIT, OTTO? FEW MEN HAVE SUCH A WARDROBE AS YOU!

EVEN THE HORRIBLE HOUSE NO LONGER SEEMED LIKE A PRISON BECAUSE I HAD NO DESIRE TO LEAVE! EACH DAY I SPENT IN THE STORE ROOM, I WAS HAPPY AND IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE KONRAD NOTICED THE CHANGE IN ME ..

YOU ARE ALWAYS SMILING NOW, HELGA, WHAT IS YOUR SECRET?

IT IS ONLY BECAUSE I HAVE BECOME MORE USED TO THIS HOUSE NOW, KONRAD!

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE SUBTLE IN MY NEW HAPPINESS, BUT I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT KONRAD WOULD NOT PERMIT ME TO BE HAPPY...

YOU ARE TOO GAY! ARE YOU SURE YOU HAVE NOT FOUND ANOTHER MAN? I DO NOT RELISH BEING TRICKED!

BE REASONABLE, KONRAD.. YOU KNOW I NEVER LEAVE THE HOUSE!

I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING! TELL ME WHO IT IS THAT MAKES YOU HAPPY OR I'LL BEAT IT OUT OF YOU!

THERE IS NO ONE PLEASE, KONRAD PLEASE!

BUT KONRAD WAS LIKE AN ENRAGED BEAST! HE HIT ME AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL I FELL IN A HELPLESS HEAP AT HIS FEET..

THAT IS ONLY A SAMPLE OF WHAT I WILL DO IF I EVER FIND OUT THERE IS SOMEONE ELSE!

THERE IS...NO. ONE... NO... ONE.

I WAITED UNTIL HE WAS OUT OF THE HOUSE THE NEXT DAY BEFORE I DARED RETURN TO THE STORE-ROOM! FLINGING MYSELF DOWN BESIDE THE DUMMY I CRIED OUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED!

OTTO... HE'S CRAZY... WHAT SHALL I DO?

SUDDENLY THE DOOR BEHIND ME WAS TORN OPEN! KONRAD STOOD THERE LOOKING LIKE A MAD MAN!

SO I FOUND YOU... WHY IT'S A DUMMY!

AS HIS FINGERS CLOSED AROUND MY THROAT I KNEW I HAD BEEN TRICKED AGAIN! HE HAD ONLY PRETENDED TO LEAVE THE HOUSE AND THEN HAD FOLLOWED ME AND DISCOVERED MY SECRET! IT WAS THEN I SCREAMED.. SCREAMED THE ONLY WORD I COULD HEAR!

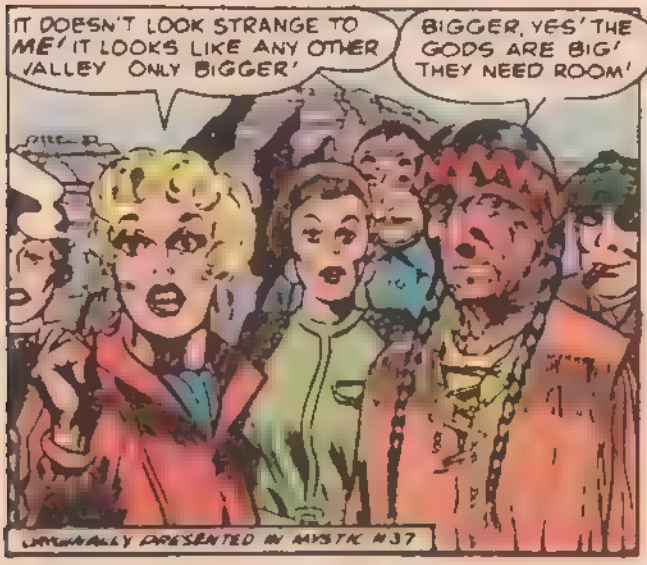
A DUMMY! MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME, WILL YOU? NOW I WILL KILL YOU!

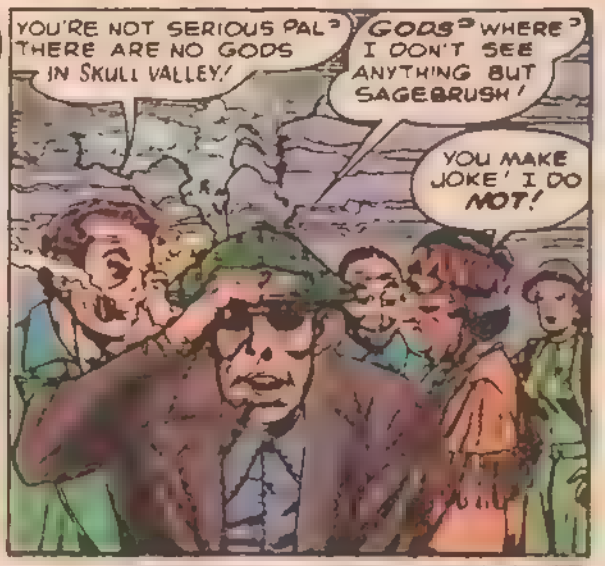
OTTO!

IT SEEMED AS THOUGH THE AIR IN THE ROOM CHANGED... AND THEN OVER KONRAD'S SHOULDER I SAW IT AT FIRST A HUGE SHADOW MOVING SLOWLY FORWARD
CLOSER AND CLOSER IT CAME! KONRAD MUST HAVE SEEN THE NEW LOOK OF TERROR ON MY FACE FOR ONE SECOND HE LOOSENED HIS GRIP ON MY THROAT
WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?
NO! NO! HELP!
THE DUMMY ANSWERED MY CALL FOR HELP! SLOWLY, THE AWKWARD FIGURE MOVED TOWARD KONRAD... BUT IT HAD CHANGED IN FACE AND FORM... IT WAS NO LONGER A DUMMY... IT WAS OTTO!
NO! NO! STAY AWAY, FROM ME!
IT HAD REACHED KONRAD NOW AND ITS FINGERS MOVED OUT FOR MY HUSBAND'S THROAT! I PUT MY HANDS OVER MY EARS TO SHUT OUT THE HORRIBLE SCREAMS FROM KONRAD
NO! NO! KEEP AWAY! EEEAAHHHH!
I TRIED NOT TO LOOK, BUT SOME FORCE COMPELLED ME TO! BEFORE MY EYES, KONRAD'S STRUGGLES LESSENED UNTIL THEY STOPPED ENTIRELY!
THEN HIS BODY CRUMPLED INTO A DEAD HEAP AT THE DUMMY'S FEET! FOR ONE SECOND IT HOVERED OVER HIM LIKE SOME HUGE HEAVENLY BIRD LOOKING AT THE DEED IT HAD COMMITTED AND IT SEEMED TO ME THERE WAS A SMILE ON ITS GROTESQUE FACE
FOR ONE SECOND ONLY. THEN IT TOO CRUMPLED TO THE FLOOR! WHEN I HAD COURAGE TO APPROACH IT... IT WAS ONLY A DUMMY WITHOUT LIFE OR ITS OWN POWER..
OTTO! BUT YOU CAN'T HEAR ME, CAN YOU? YOU'RE ONLY A DUMMY!
THE POLICE WERE VERY NICE ABOUT EVERYTHING AND THEY ATTRIBUTED MY HUSBAND'S DEATH TO THE WORK OF SOME PROWLER AND EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN OVER MY BEING ALONE IN THE HOUSE! BUT I WASN'T WORRIED FOR I HAD OTTO. OTTO WHO HAD PROMISED TO ALWAYS WATCH OVER ME! NO, I NEED NEVER AGAIN FEAR ANYTHING!
LOOK, OTTO, DO YOU LIKE THE SWEATER I'M KNITTING FOR YOU? IT WILL LOOK SO WELL ON YOU
THE END
8

THE THING THAT STALKS SKULL VALLEY!

THEY WERE INTELLECTUALS FROM NEW YORK... THEY WERE TOO **SOPHISTICATED** TO BELIEVE THE OBVIOUS... TOO **COMPLICATED** TO SEE THE SIMPLE TRUTH ABOUT


IT DOESN'T LOOK STRANGE TO ME! IT LOOKS LIKE ANY OTHER VALLEY ONLY BIGGER!
BIGGER, YES! THE GODS ARE BIG! THEY NEED ROOM!
ORIGINALLY PRESENTED IN MYSTIC #37



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A FEW SURPRISES—A SMATTERING OF SURMISES —AND A HINT ABOUT PRIZES!

ROY'S ROSTRUM

Sorry, people, but no STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX this time, 'cause Our Fearless Leader is out of town. Matter of fact, he's leapfroggin' all over Europe, but, more of that from The Man himself, soon as he recovers from jet lag!

Meanwhile, I thought this would be a good chance to answer one of the myriad questions which is asked in numerous letters every day: namely just who is the editorial staff of Marvel Comics, anyway?

Well, besides STAN and myself (who manage to keep busy, what with one thing and another), there's Marvelous MARV WOLFMAN, who — in addition to being Editor of our newest smash hit, CRAZY Magazine — basks in the title of Associate Editor. Right about now, Marv is spending virtually his full workday, and then some, on CRAZY and on our popular line of giant-sized mags, including our spanking-new biggie, THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU — of which more on our Bullpen Bonus Page!

As to our ever-enchanting color comics, they're mostly proofread and pondered over by Dutiful DON McGREGOR and our newest nabob, Devil-May-Care DOUG MOENCH, who just blew in from the Windy City! These two lads are classified officially as Assistant Editors — but they and Marv shoulder enough responsibilities to give Atlas a backache!

Oh yes — and we don't wanna forget Cute CARLA JOSEPH, who doubles as my secretary and as proofreader of our letters pages and reprints, in addition to a thousand-and-one other tasks that need doing!

And wouldja believe — with all those editorial types running around, the work keeps piling up!

Fact is, that's why our hard-working writers receive billing as Contributing Editors, as well: Merry GERRY CONWAY, who scripts several of our top mags each month; STEVE (Baby) GERBER, who labors over our letters pages, in addition to his other chores; Live-It-Up LEN WEIN, TONY (The Tiger) ISABELLA, and even such faraway stalwarts as Stainless STEVE ENGLEHART and Mischievous MIKE FRIEDRICH.

Pardon me for getting all dewy-eyed, but I truly don't believe that any editor in comics history was ever lucky enough to have assembled such a team of talented typewriter titans!

Now, if I could only persuade a guy named LEE to pound that battered old Remington of his, now and then — I'd have it made!

Salud!

Roy

ITEM! Here's an off-the-wall flash! You've doubtless heard of the block-bustin' new movie, THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD, now making the rounds at your local cinema. Well, only a few short weeks from now, by special arrangement with Columbia Pictures, mirthful Marvel will present its own full-color version of that instant film classic! See the movie — read the comic-mag — and if there aren't any bubble-gum cards to collect, don't blame *us*!

ITEM! Just a brief aside to thank those of you who rushed us the first Brobdingnagian batch of mail we've received on our mighty MARVEL VALUE STAMPS! It seems that, without really knowing it, half of Marveldom Assembled has been just waiting for something like this! And, by next month, we promise to clue you in on the first (but not the last) of several Bonus Benefits you can obtain once you've amassed a full collection of the first hundred stamps! Till then — keep those scissors well-oiled, effendi!

MARVEL MINI-ITEMS! Congrats to GERRY CONWAY (also known in the trade as GERARD F. CONWAY) on his newest s-f opus, *Mindship*, due out as a paperback from DAW Books right about now! At age 21 and with two published books (plus a whole passel of short stories) to his credit, Ger's the envy of the whole blamed Bullpen! • Speaking of Mr. C., he's teamed up with a fair-to-middlin' artist named JOHN ROMITA on the latest SPIDER-MAN — and the result is just short of fantastic! The Jazzy One's been dying to draw an issue for months now, but his back-bending chores as Marvel's Art Director have kept him busy on covers and such! Anyway, you've been clamoring for more of J.R.'s work all along — so let the guy know you care! • We kinda think you'll dig the new penciller on MAN-THING, a fella name of MIKE PLOOG, who's drawn every Marvel monster from WEREWOLF to FRANKENSTEIN and back again! Keep it up, Michael, and maybe one of these days we'll see if you still remember how to draw a *human being*! • Hey, wanna know what one member of the Bullpen thinks happened to those missing Watergate tapes? Well then, sneak a peek at the latest "War of the Worlds" epic in AMAZING ADVENTURES, as Don McGregor and Happy HERB TRIMPE finally let the cat out of the bag! • We were gonna mention something here about Vulcanizin' VICENTE ALCAZAR, whose recent artwork in DRACULA LIVES, THONGOR, and elsewhere is already earning him a whole horde of fans — about how he came here to Fun City from his native Spain — about how Nefarious NEAL ADAMS sent him around to us — and how we don't intend to let him get away. But, now we look around and he's flown the coop back to Madrid for a few months to get things in order (all the while turning out collector's items by the barrelful). So we think we'll save our plug for when he moves fulltime to the U.S. of A., okay?

ITEM THE LAST! Closing note: Here's a message in our brand new Code, as featured in the 4th fabulous issue of FOOM Magazine, and thus decipherable only by accredited FOOM Members and selected FBI brass. It concerns still another 75¢ mag that'll be coming your way by the time spring rolls around, and we'll sock it to you in two short words:

LIDG ALZO!

There! Now who said we can't keep it short and sweet — especially when we're running out of room!

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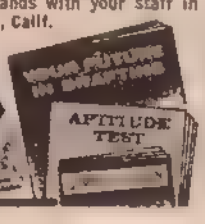

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YOU NO BELIEVE? I NOT CARE!
WAIT A MINUTE! YOU THINK GODS PLAY GAMES DOWN THERE IN THE VALLEY?
GODS NO PLAY GAMES! GODS HUNT... SPEAK ... THEY DANCE.. THEY SING! ALL INDIANS BELIEVE THIS!
G'WAN! THAT'S THE SPIEL YOU HAND ALL THE TOURISTS!
I SAY NO MORE! WE GO DOWN INTO VALLEY! FOLLOW, PLEASE! BE CAREFUL... SOME STONES LOOSE!
HE'S A GREAT COMEDIAN! HE SAID ALL THAT WITHOUT ONCE CRACKING A SMILE!
BUT DO YOU SUPPOSE THE INDIANS THEMSELVES BELIEVE SKULL VALLEY'S A PLAYGROUND FOR THEIR GODS? DO THEY TAKE IT SERIOUSLY?
NOT NOW! THESE REDSKINS ARE ALL WASHED UP! THEY'RE 20TH CENTURY AMERICANS!
INJUN SAM WON'T ADMIT IT, BUT HIS FAIRY TALES ARE STRICTLY FOR TOURISTS!
YOU'RE RIGHT! YOU HAVE TO BE CRAZY TO SWALLOW THOSE LEGENDS!
2

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THAT NIGHT, IN SKULL VALLEY...
SAY, SAM... TELL US ANOTHER YARN!
NO! YOU LAUGH AT MY STORIES! YOU THINK SAM MAKE 'EM UP!
AW, YOU CAN'T EXPECT PEOPLE IN THIS DAY AND AGE TO BELIEVE IN YOUR LEGENDS!
LEGENDS SAY TRUTH FOR ALL AGES! YOU TALK AGAINST GODS. THEY HEAR YOU! THEY GET ANGRY!
WE'RE TOO OLD TO BELIEVE IN SPOOKS!
WWW
SAM TELL TRUTH! SAM SORRY HE TAKE YOU ON TRIP!
WE KNOW YOU'RE MAKING UP THESE TALES! DON'T TELL US THEY GO BACK A THOUSAND YEARS IN INDIAN HISTORY!
AND EVEN IF INDIANS DID BELIEVE THESE THINGS A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, WE DON'T HAVE TO! WE'RE NOT INDIANS!
NO! NOR GOOD PEOPLE EITHER! THE GREAT SPIRITS HEAR YOU!
THEY HEAR YOU LAUGH AT THEIR POWER! THEY NOT LIKE! THEY STAND OUT THERE... IN VALLEY... AND WATCH EVERYTHING!
WHERE? I DON'T SEE ANYTHING BUT MOONLIGHT!
YOU SEE NOTHING! YOU KNOW NOTHING! YOU BELIEVE NOTHING! GODS LAUGH AT YOU!
OKAY, SAM, HAVE IT YOUR WAY! THIS IS THE HAPPY HUNTING GROUNDS OF THE GODS! THIS IS WHERE THEY PLAY GAMES! THEY PLAY BASEBALL... WITH PINE TREES FOR BATS AND MESAS FOR BASES! OKAY?
THE FOLLOWING DAY, ON THE SLOPES...
FUNNY HOW ANGRY SAM GOT LAST NIGHT! I THINK WE REALLY HURT HIS FEELINGS!
G'WAN! IT WAS A GOOD ACT! ANYWAY, THE GODS WEREN'T WRONG ABOUT ONE THING! THEY PICKED A BEAUTIFUL VALLEY TO PLAY IN!
3

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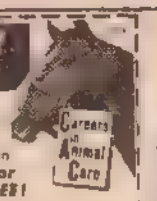

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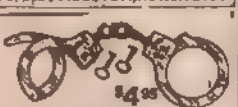

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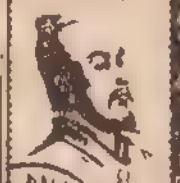

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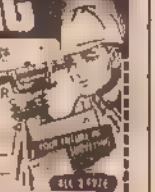

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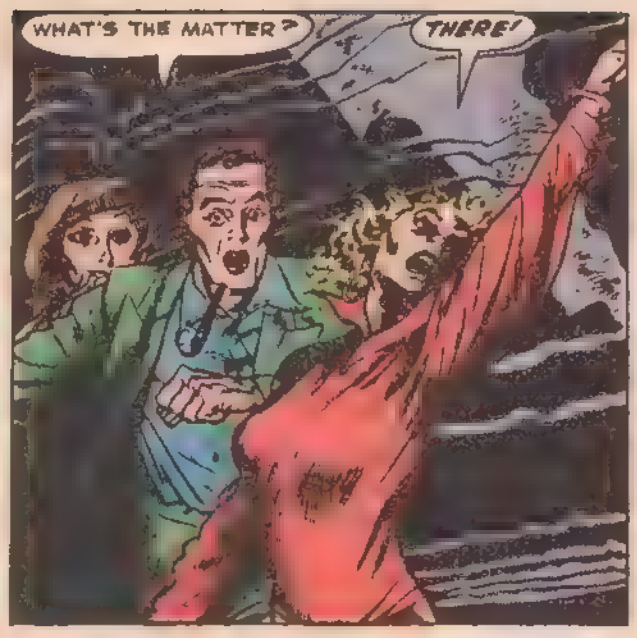


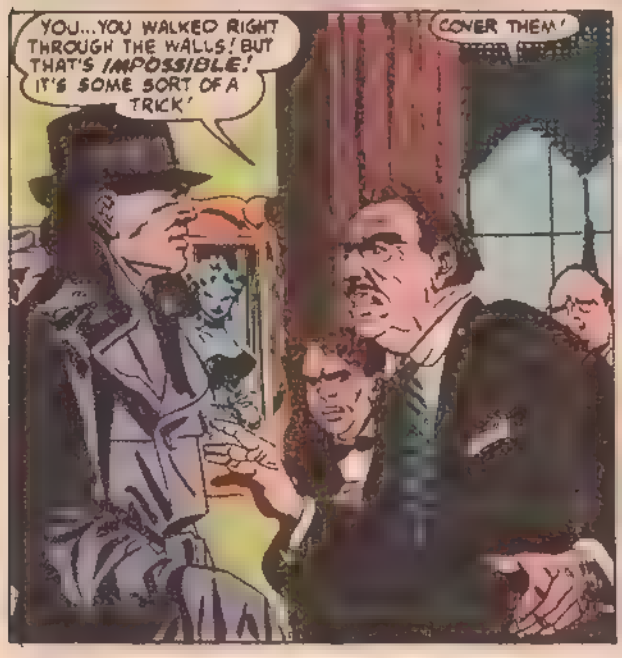
AN HOUR LATER, AT THE CAMP.

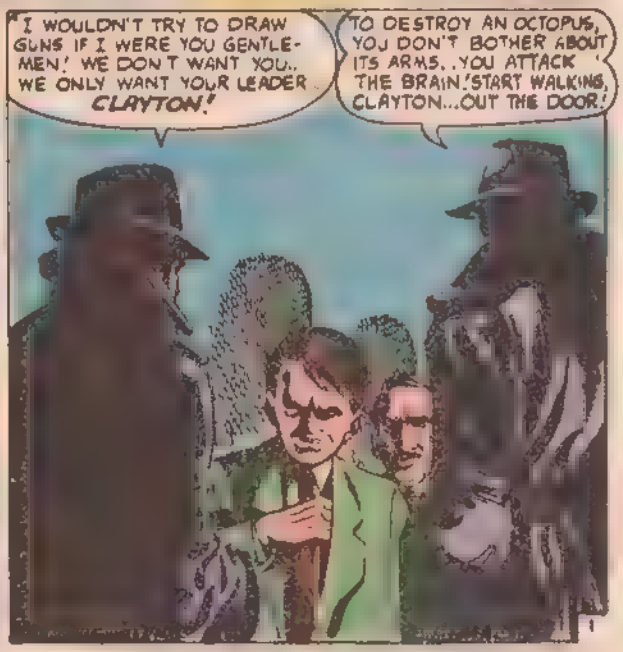
THEY SAID NOTHING! AN HOUR LATER, THEY LEFT THE SKULL VALLEY/ AND THEY NEVER MENTIONED IT AGAIN!

THEY WALK THRU WALLS!

CLAYTON DREAMED OF BECOMING A DICTATOR AND IT SEEMED THAT NO ONE STOOD IN HIS WAY! BUT THAT WAS BEFORE HE MET THE MEN FROM TOMORROW!
A FEW MORE MONTHS AND WE'LL BE READY! OUR ORGAN ZATION KEEPS GROWING! ONE BLOW, AND I'LL BE RULER OF THE UNITED STATES!
YOU'LL NEVER RULE THIS COUNTRY, CLAYTON! WE'LL SEE TO THAT!
ART: PAUL REINMAN

ORIGINALLY PRESENTED IN ASTONISHING TALES #56




I WOULDN'T TRY TO DRAW GUNS IF I WERE YOU GENTLEMEN! WE DON'T WANT YOU.. WE ONLY WANT YOUR LEADER CLAYTON!
TO DESTROY AN OCTOPUS, YOU DON'T BOTHER ABOUT ITS ARMS..YOU ATTACK THE BRAIN! START WALKING, CLAYTON...OUT THE DOOR!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

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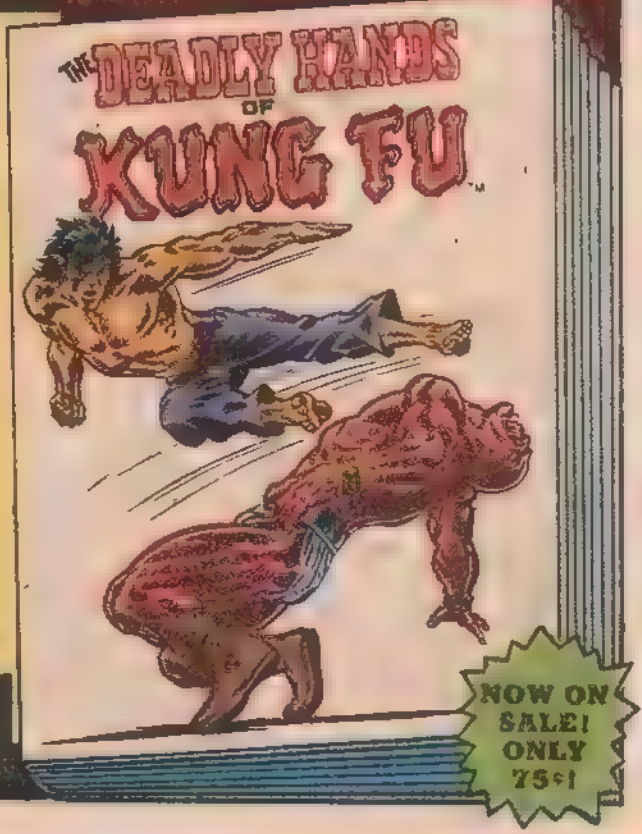

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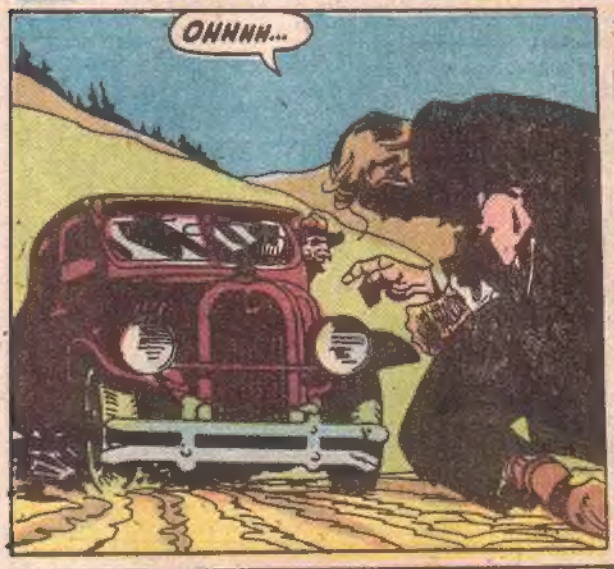
WITH HIS MEN TOO WARY TO INTERFERE, CLAYTON HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY..
GET IN, CLAYTON.. WE'RE READY TO TAKE OFF!
IT WAS ONLY AFTERWARD THAT THE MAN'S ALARM LESSENED ENOUGH FOR HIM TO SPEAK OUT...
ALL RIGHT, WHO ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME? YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO DO THIS!
YOU SPEAK OF RIGHTS, CLAYTON? A MAN WHO IS PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW HIS OWN GOVERNMENT BY FORCE!
YOU MIGHT AS WELL KNOW, CLAYTON... MY NAME IS MASTERS, AND THIS IS MY PARTNER, ABBOT... WE REPRESENT A GROUP OF PEOPLE DEDICATED TO THE CAUSE OF PEACE AND CONTENTMENT IN THE WORLD!
WE'RE GUARDIANS, CLAYTON... GUARDIANS OF MANKIND! WHEN MEN LIKE YOU THREATEN MANKIND, WE ACT!
WHEN THE FIRST OF US WAS BORN AND GREW UP, HE DECIDED THAT WE SHOULD USE OUR POWERS TO PROTECT MANKIND...
AND SO, THERE IS YOUR NEW HOME, CLAYTON! YOU WILL BE WELL TREATED! BUT YOU WILL REMAIN THERE, WHERE YOU CAN DO NO HARM!
A PRISON! CLAYTON SHUDDERED! HE WAS A COWARD, BUT EVEN A COWARD WILL FIGHT WHEN THERE IS NO OTHER WAY..
NO! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LOCK ME AWAY! I WON'T LET YOU!
YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL ME! THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU'LL KEEP ME HERE!
CLAYTON, NO! DON'T! WE CAN'T HARM YOU!
2

CAN'T? SO, THAT'S IT! I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN YOU'D HAVE A WEAKNESS! YOU CAN'T HIT BACK! YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO BE VIOLENT! YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE GUNS!

CLAYTON FOUGHT, BECAUSE THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY! AND SO HE STUMBLED ON THE TRUTH...

IT WAS ALL A BLUFF! YOU'RE TOO CIVILIZED TO USE VIOLENCE! BUT I'M NOT! TRY TO STOP ME AND I'LL SHOW YOU!
CLAYTON! DON'T BE A FOOL! YOU'RE RIGHT... WE CAN'T USE VIOLENCE! BUT YOU'RE HUNDREDS OF MILES FROM CIVILIZATION! COME BACK!

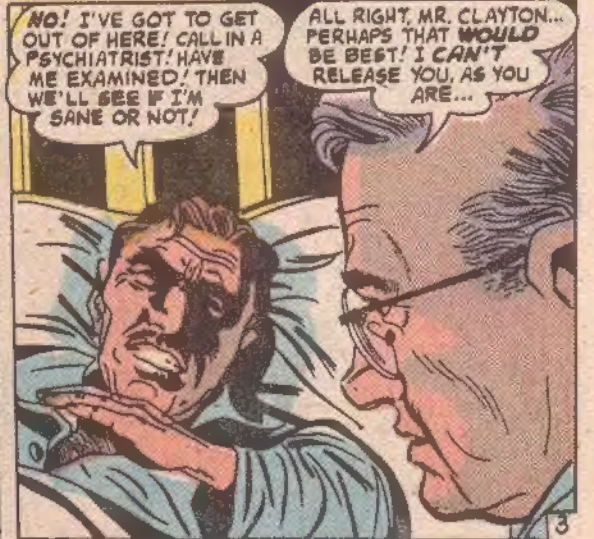
BUT CLAYTON DID NOT COME BACK! HIS DREAM FOR POWER DROVE HIM ON AND ON, AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED...



AFTERWARD, THERE WAS THE DELIRIUM! BUT THEN, CLAYTON'S BRAIN COULD FUNCTION AGAIN! HE COULD STILL WIN, IF THE MEN OF TOMORROW COULD BE DESTROYED...

SO YOU STILL BELIEVE THAT YOU REALLY SAW THESE MEN WALK THROUGH WALLS! MR. CLAYTON, DON'T YOU SEE? YOUR MIND...
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY MIND! YOU THINK I IMAGINED IT! BUT I DIDN'T! MASTERS AND THE OTHERS ARE REAL!

YOU FOOL! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THEY'VE GOT TO BE DESTROYED! THEY'RE PLOTTING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT! ONE BOMB ON THAT CASTLE OF THEIRS...
OF COURSE... BUT YOU'D BETTER REST...


NO! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! CALL IN A PSYCHIATRIST! HAVE ME EXAMINED! THEN WE'LL SEE IF I'M SANE OR NOT!
ALL RIGHT, MR. CLAYTON... PERHAPS THAT WOULD BE BEST! I CAN'T RELEASE YOU, AS YOU ARE...

AUNT MAY MARRIES DOC OCK? DON'T MISS THE WEDDING OF THE CENTURY, IN SPIDER-MAN #131!

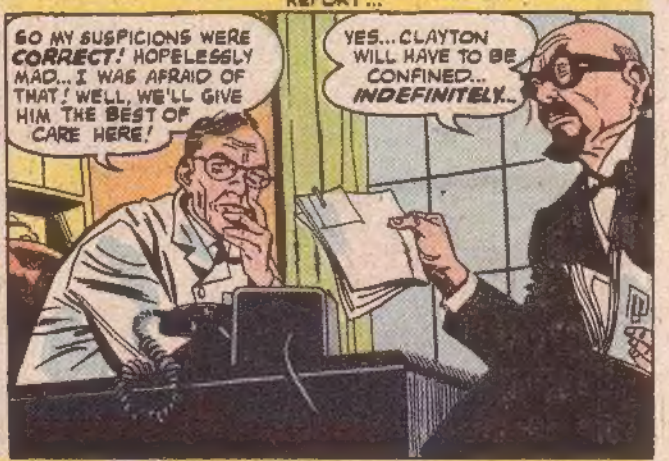
IF THE MEN OF TOMORROW COULD BE DESTROYED, WHO COULD STAND IN CLAYTON'S WAY? SO HE WAS READY WHEN THE PSYCHIATRIST CAME... HE SPOKE QUIETLY, SANELY...

WELL, DOCTOR? YOU'VE HEARD MY STORY, AND YOU'VE EXAMINED ME! WHAT'S THE VERDICT?
IT'S QUITE A STORY, MISTER CLAYTON! BUT YOU'RE AS SANE AS I AM!

THEN, YOU'LL GET ME OUT OF HERE? YOU'LL SEE TO IT THAT THE RIGHT PEOPLE HEAR ABOUT MASTER'S PLOT?
MY REPORT WILL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING... I GIVE YOU MY WORD!

IN THE END IT WAS ALMOST TOO EASY...

CLAYTON EXULTED, AS HE HAD IN THE BEGINNING! HE DREAMED HIS DREAMS OF POWER! BUT, HE DID **NOT SEE** THE PSYCHIATRIST'S REPORT...


SO MY SUSPICIONS WERE CORRECT! HOPELESSLY MAD... I WAS AFRAID OF THAT! WELL, WE'LL GIVE HIM THE BEST OF CARE HERE!
YES... CLAYTON WILL HAVE TO BE CONFINED... INDEFINITELY...

CLAYTON KNEW NOTHING OF THE CONVERSATION WHICH SEALED HIS FATE! HE KNEW NOTHING OF THE MAN WHO PAUSED, LATER, BY HIS DOOR!

SO, HOW COULD CLAYTON KNOW THAT HE HAD BEEN DOOMED FROM THE FIRST?...

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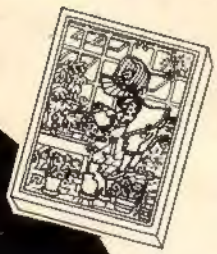

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